

Seventy - five Years

1875 - 1950



The CHURCH of the
HOLY COMFORTER
of West Philadelphia
and of

ARONIMINK
Drexel Hill, Pa.

Diocesan Library and Reading Room

CHURCH HOUSE

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Philadelphia

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Dedication

To the memory of

CHARLES WESLEY SCHIFFER, Priest and Doctor

Rector of this Parish Seventeen Years

Whose Vision, Determination, and Courage,

Successfully Effected the Transition

Of the Church of the Holy Comforter

From West Philadelphia to Aronimink,

That It Might Continue to Serve

To the Greater Glory of GOD.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER

Seventy-five Years — 1875-1950

How true it is that "a little child shall lead them"! Looking back over the years of the life of the Church of the Holy Comforter, of West Philadelphia and now of Aronimink, we see that borne out in fact and history, for it has been the leading of little children which has made Holy Comforter what it is. Begun as a Sunday School and carried forward by the demands of the children around it, the parish looks back now over almost a century of continuous life and teaching.

It was in the summer of 1863, while the War was at its height, that the beginnings were made. West Philadelphia was but sparsely settled and when one of the older girls Sunday School classes at the Church of the Saviour, out in the suburbs at 38th Street, decided to start a mission Sunday School in the country, the vicinity of 43rd and Haverford Sts. seemed a likely spot. Their teacher, Mrs. Bacon, was a woman of enterprize, and soon located a vacant house on North 43rd Street suitable for their purposes. The girls had no assets except their energy; they scrubbed and cleaned the house themselves, and opened the school—without books, without furniture, but with numbers of eager children—and so successful were the first Sundays of their mission that they were soon able to enlist the interest of Mr. Edwin J. Houston, who accepted the post of Superintendent and, visiting the second-hand shops and appealing to the Bible and Prayer Book Society, managed to supply the needed physical equipment.

There is no record of the attendance this first summer and, since the house contained no stoves, the sessions were discontinued at the approach of cold weather, but the foundation had been laid. During the winter the girls raised money in the usual ways against the next summer's session and in the spring

of 1864 the school reopened with the same enthusiastic staff: Mr. Houston, Mrs. Bacon, Miss DeNegre, Miss Laura Hanline, Miss Mary Nesmith, Mrs. Davis, Miss Gates, Mrs. Richard Blondin, and Mr. E. S. B. Thomas.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Houston moved from Philadelphia and was succeeded as Superintendent by Mr. Walter North, who remained for two years until 1866 when he resigned to enter Devinity School. His successor was Mr. Charles Henry Yost who served in this capacity for twenty-four years and was one of the true founding fathers of the Church of the Holy Comforter.

The school was now meeting in a house belonging to Mrs. Blondin, at 46th and Haverford Sts. She was a major element in the success of the whole effort, giving the use of the building rent-free and also fitting it out with a platform, reading desk, stoves, & etc, so that the school could meet all the year round. Mr. Yost made careful notes of these earliest days and his description of the old Sunday School is interesting:

"Upon one side of the room there was a platform with a book-rest in front, which answered the purpose of a reading-desk and pulpit. There was in the school room a large closet, or rather dresser, which answered admirably for a book case. The library contained about 400 volumes. The main room was quite a large one for a private residence, but after placing the desks, benches, and other necessary furniture in it, and adding to this eight or ten teachers and some 50 or 60 children, there was not a great deal of space remaining unoccupied. The sessions of the Infant School were held in another apartment at the front of the building. The highest number of scholars upon the roll was 140, and the largest attendance at a regular session was 100."

Being so far successful, the next move was to attempt regular church services on Sunday afternoons, various willing clergymen visiting as they were able. Next, several of the men of the Mission were licensed

by the Bishop as lay-readers, to fill the gaps. Then finally Dr. Kellogg, Rector of the Church of the Saviour, took the situation in hand and engaged a curate whose principle duty was to be at the new mission. This was the Rev. Joseph A. Stone, formerly at Marcus Hook, who began his work at Holy Comforter on June 1, 1867.

By now the house on 46th Street was totally inadequate and the teachers petitioned Dr. Kellogg to approach the Vestry of the Church of the Saviour on the subject of building a real chapel to house the work. The Vestry consented and appointed one of their number, a Mr. Jeffries, to act with the teachers in the matter of fund raising. Mr. Jeffries deserves the greatest of praise, for not only did he succeed in raising personally the largest part of the money required, but he also obtained pledges from various friends to underwrite the salary of the curate for two years, so that the mission might have a chance to become self-sustaining.

The chapel cost about \$5000 and the corner-stone was laid by the Rt. Rev. William Bacon Stevens on Thursday, Nov. 14, 1867. Mr. Yost writes:

"It is needless to tell you how anxiously the teachers looked forward to the time when this roof should shelter their school. They no doubt well remember that bright and beautiful autumn afternoon in 1867 when we were gathered together to witness the laying of the corner-stone by our beloved Bishop; and how earnestly we joined in the prayers and the hymns, and how attentively we listened to the remarks of Bishop Stevens, Dr. Home, Dr. Claxton, Dr. Butler, and to the reading of the report (relating to the Chapel and the contents of the corner-stone) by Mr. Stone. . . . In the center of the corner-stone is placed a metallic box containing a Bible and a Prayer Book, a few of the coins of the country, several of the daily newspapers, and such other matter as is usually deposited. Immediately beneath this box is placed

a roll of the school. We intended to put it in the box, but it was sealed before the omission was noticed."

In Bishop Stevens' Record in the Diocesan Journal of 1868 is this note: "Thursday, Nov. 14th—I laid the corner-stone of the Ch. of the Holy Comforter, W.P., and made an address." And in the same Journal is the following report from the Rev. Joseph A. Stone:

"Since the first Sunday in June, 1867, I have been officiating as Ass't. Min. of the Ch. of the Saviour, W.P. and also as Minister-in-Charge of its Mission "Ch. of the Holy Comforter." The cornerstone of this church was laid last November by the Bishop of the Diocese, it is rapidly nearing completion, and it is much needed in that growing portion of the city in which it is situated. On June 1st my connection with the Ch. of the Saviour ceases and I assume the rectorship of the above mission church of the Holy Comforter."

His report to the Convention in 1869 continues the description:

"The chapel is situated at the corner of 48th St. and Haverford Ave., directly opposite the Male Dept. of the Penna. Hospital for the Insane. . . . The church was finished and opened for services on the first Sunday in July, 1868 . . . It is a very neat and substantial stone structure and occupies the most beautiful and commanding site within the limits of the city. . . . We have a large and flourishing Sunday School, Mr. C. L. Yost, Supt.; an excellent choir; a very efficient Parish Aid Society; Mothers Meeting; Sewing School; & etc., each working in its own sphere of labor most successfully and profitably."

In another place Mr. Stone remarks, "The people do not do as much as they might, being content to depend upon others." And so it seems to have worked out, for at the end of the two years the people of the mission could not meet Mr. Stone's salary and the friends of Mr. Jeffries no longer cared to; so in

June of '69 Mr. Stone was forced to look for greener fields.

To fill his place came William Henry Platt, then a Middler Class student at the Divinity School. For five years he worked at Holy Comforter, finishing his studies meanwhile and being ordained successively Deacon and Priest, and thus qualifying as regular Rector for the parish. Mr. Platt had the distinction of presenting the first Confirmation Class—five candidates—on April 11, 1871, and he brought about material improvements in the property—the introduction of gas lights, adequate pews, & etc.—but the financial status of the parish did not improve and at Easter 1874, he resigned from Holy Comforter to become Rector of St. Mark's, Lewistown, Pa.

One might think that after ten years the chapel should have been self-supporting. The Vestry at the Church of the Saviour seem to have thought so, for they were eager to dissolve their connection with the chapel as early as 1873. But it must be remembered that at this time the new church stood in the midst of open lots. There was an unbroken vista east to 43rd Street and to the west nothing but farms, while the Hospital wall, then as now, cut off the southern prospect. It was not until 1876 that 48th Street was graded and paved, and it was 1887 before anything more rapid than horse-cars connected the church with the world of the city.

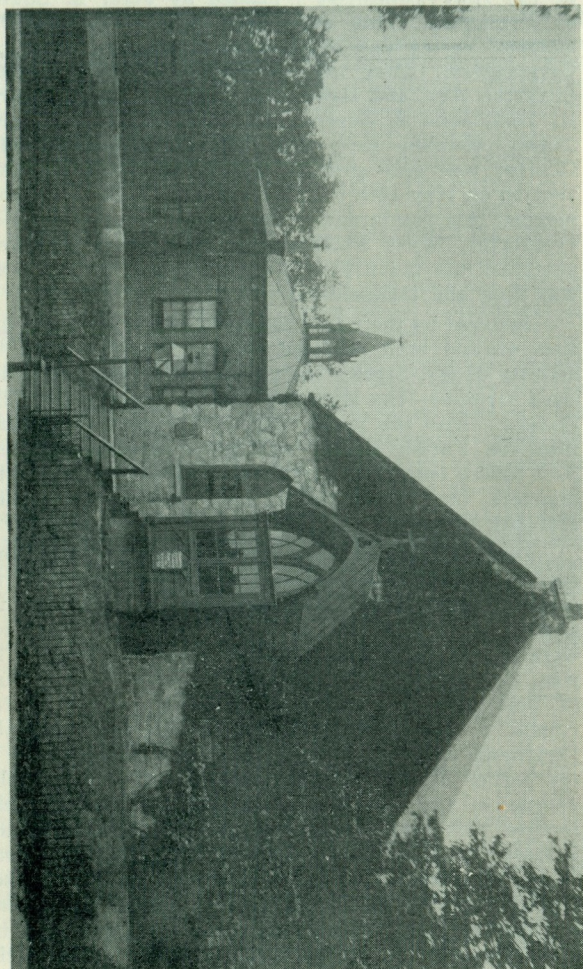
The third rector was the Rev. Henry Morton Reed, a young priest just recently ordained and whose aggressive leadership brought the chapel out of dependant status. In April 1875 the Standing Committee of the Diocese gave their consent to "the conveyance by the Ch. of the Saviour, W.P. to the Ch. of the Holy Comforter, W.P. of the lot of ground and church edifice thereon, at the N.W. corner of 48th and Haverford Sts., the congregation worshipping at this point having heretofore been a mission chapel of the Ch. of the Saviour". Before this time there had been a "Committee in Charge of the Chapel

of the Holy Comforter", headed by John B. Squires as President. This committee now formed a Provisional Vestry and applied for a Charter as a free Corporation. They met on March 30, 1875 at 4804 Silverton Ave. and signed the Charter: Mssrs. Charles H. Yost, John B. Squires, Caleb J. Duxberry, Samuel James, William Ker, and William Wilkinson. The Charter was duly granted and at the Diocesan Convention on May 12th the Committee on Charters recommended this resolution, "That the Church of the Holy Comforter, West Philadelphia, be and it is hereby admitted into union with this Convention." The parish was free and independant.

Spurred by their new responsibilities, the congregation worked with renewed vigor. In addition to the activity of Mr. Stone's time, there were two new children's societies—the Mite-Box Society and the Busy Bee Society. Also the young men of the parish organized into the Parish Guild, with over seventy members. And before long the church was cramped in its limited quarters, the Sunday School alone having 33 teachers and 301 children.

Immediately Mr. Reed began to drive toward some sort of parish social hall. The money seemed forthcoming; some \$1200 was expended on repairing the present chapel alone; and early in 1879 contracts were signed for a new Sunday School Building. This was the famous "Round-house", completed in June of that year—an octagonal building with a central cupola in the best carpenter Gothic, and movable partitions within. It was for years a landmark at the corner of 48th and Haverford, and was probably unique in the annals of Philadelphia church architecture. Its cost is unknown, but the Sunday School is known to have raised a \$1000 of the amount alone. There was some debt on it when it was first used, but in 1881 Mr. Reed had another campaign to clear it; another \$1000 was raised and the balance of the debt was met in monthly installments. The parish hummed with activity during this period and it

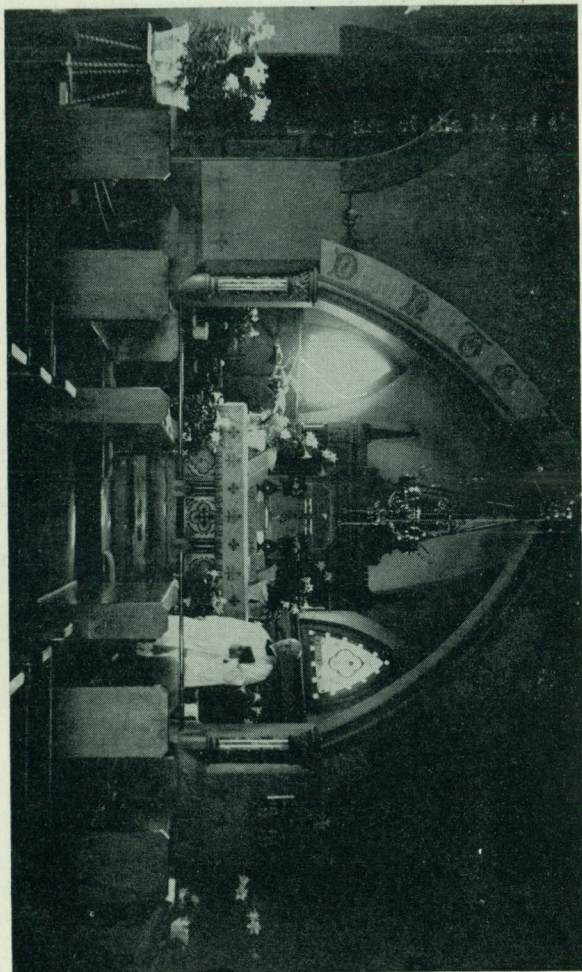
EXTERIOR VIEW OF OLD CHURCH



was with real regret that the congregation received the resignation of the energetic young pastor, who left Philadelphia in 1884 to accept a charge in the Diocese of New York.

Now came ten years of uncertainty and marking time. Mr. Reed was followed by the Rev. D. E. Mortimer, who remained but a little more than a year. In 1886 came the Rev. Enoch N. Supplee; in 1888 the Rev. Horace Frederick Fuller; in 1891 the Rev. Robert Blight; in 1892 the Rev. William H. Stark; in 1893 the Diocesan Report says "No Minister", altho in June of that year the Rev. William N. Bailey was appointed Minister-in-Charge; in 1894 the Rev. S. H. Meade is appointed in his place. The increasing financial problems are implied by the titles of the clergy: Mr. Mortimer was called as Rector; ten years later the Bishop is appointing Ministers-in-charge. The Church of the Holy Comforter had slipped back to needing assistance. Had Mr. Mortimer stayed at his post it might have been avoided, but now it was too late, and in November 1895 the Vestry sold the property to St. Stephen's Church (10th and Market), which was considering a move from the center of the city into a suburban location. St. Stephen's also bought a large lot at 52nd and Market Sts., and Holy Comforter was run as a mission of St. Stephen's with the Rev. Dr. S. D. McConnell as Rector (he came out on Sundays to preach) and the Rev. J. J. Lanier stationed at 48th and Haverford as Minister-in-Charge and Curate of St. Stephen's.

Various matters of interest transpired during these uncertain years however. In 1889 a handsome brass corona (or ecclesiastical chandelier) was placed in the chancel by the Daughters of the King, and a wooden Altar Cross placed on the Holy Table. The following summer the church received the wooden altar and reredos, with full sets of the colored hangings, from St. Mary's Hamilton Village—St. Mary's then installing the famous mosaic altar piece for which the church is still well-known. The present



altar in Aronimink is this same one from St. Mary's Church. Also in June 1892 a vested choir made its initial appearance at Holy Comforter. The congregation were not inactive—just poor and without real leadership.

In 1896 the Vestry of St. Stephen's decided not to move and the control of the Holy Comforter went back to the Diocese, the Rev. W. F. C. Morsell being sent as Minister-in-Charge. Immediately a strong hand took the rein and things became more prosperous, although the Vestry already were pondering the problem of a changing neighborhood which was to dog them for so long. In '98 they went as far as to consult the Standing Committee about moving the corporation, but their request was refused. However, stability returned to the parish in short order. In 1899 the Vestry could report that once again they were independant of the Convention, and the next year Mr. Morsell was duly elected as Rector.

Great activity followed. A Men's Brotherhood was founded; also a Baptismal Brotherhood (on the basis of the baptismal vows), and the Parish Guild was reorganized on a basis of Chapters, each working in some special field. A monthly parish magazine, "Church Progress" was started, which was printed successfully for thirty-five years until 1929. But with all this there were still little failures, witness the gift to the church in 1902 of "two additional hymn boards, with the proviso "that the hymns be put up *before* the congregation assembles." (!)

Mr. Morsell resigned in September 1902. Five years he had labored for Holy Comforter and there was much to show for his efforts. Indeed, it was owing to Mr. Morsell, with the aid of Bishop Mackay-Smith, that the church could declare itself free of debt once more on Christmas 1903.

The rectorate of the Rev. Edward James McHenry, who came to Holy Comforter on February 1, 1903, marks the high tide line of the parish during its years in West Philadelphia. The parish was a bee-hive

of activity and growing constantly. West Philadelphia was building up, and in 1904 the Vestry gave their consent to the establishment of the Chapel of the Mediator at 51st & Spruce Sts. adjacent to their own parish. On their own part they were planning a new building scheme for 48th and Haverford Ave. The "round-house" was old and inadequate; something had to be done, and so the first of several Building Committees was appointed—Messrs. John Ackroyd, E. T. Matlack, and Robert Shoemaker.

One item of interest from the Vestry Minutes at this period is the following report of the Choir Committee on a subject which is timeless:

"Your Committee have to report that the conduct of the Choir during Divine Service is marked by gross irreverence and that complaints are being made by the Congregation. It is suggested that the attention of the Choirmaster be called to the matter and that he enjoin all talking, laughter; and unseemly conduct under penalty of instant dismissal from the Choir of the offending member. The matter of irreverent conduct on the part of choirs before and after service was brought to the attention of the Diocesan Convention by the Bishop Coadjutor, and it is further suggested by your Committee that the Choirmaster enforce absolute silence on the part of the members of our choir while in the choir-room before and after services. The loud talking and laughter before services is disturbing to those in the church engaged in private devotions. After services, the loud talking commences before the final Amen is fairly over, again disturbing the Congregation while on their knees, and showing gross irreverence on the part of the Choir.

Respectively submitted, L. Willard Harris, Chr.

A strong letter was written by the Vestry to the Choirmaster—at this time, Mr. Elmer E. Keeley—but the results of the letter are not recorded.

Another bit from the Minutes is the following

report on the 1910 winter schedule of the men's group:

"A Lyceum to be held in the Sunday School Room the third Tuesday evening of each month beginning in October, except in December when it will be held on the second Wednesday. At these meetings there will be speakers of note who will speak on topics of the day and reply to any questions on the subject after the meeting. In October Mr. William A. Andrews has promised to discuss the subject, "The Workings of Our Present Banking System", and will tell why the present system is the best. In November Mr. David D. Chiddister will tell why the present system is the worst. The speaker for December is a Mr. Lytle who will tell why labor unions are the best things for the working people, and it is hoped that for January a man may be selected to answer Mr. Lytle and tell why labor unions are the worst things for the working people."

This organization was alive, and there were many others equally so. In the fall of 1911, when the "Cross and Crown System of Attendance Awards" was introduced in the Sunday School (it is still in use, incidentally), there were over two hundred and fifty pupils enrolled. A list of the various Chapters in the all-inclusive "Guild of the Holy Comforter" shows also the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, the Junior B. of St. A., the Woman's Auxiliary, the Daughters of the King, the Sisters of Bethany, the Girls Friendly, and St. Anges Chapter. And there was also the Chancel Chapter, St. Vincent's Chapter (Acolytes), and the Rector's Aid Chapter. Apparently the people of Holy Comforter have always been fond of organizing and having meetings! And no wonder the parish needed more buildings.

In September 1909 further steps were taken toward the new building, and a new Committee was appointed: Messrs. John F. James, William J. Harper, and Dr. Charles E. Price. They had the land sur-

veyed and endeavored to set up a competition among the Philadelphia architects. But they met with little success on that score; only one firm would compete—viz. Folsom, Crowe, and Stanton—and so the Committee went further afield and finally settled on the choice of Clarence Brazier of New York City, whose designs were truly handsome. Mr. Brazier visited the Vestry in West Philadelphia and in February 1910 the contract was signed with him. The estimated cost of the first unit was \$18,000 and the Vestry took steps to raise or borrow the money. The Standing Committee gave their consent to the mortgaging of the property for \$15,000, but it was not easy to find a taker as the neighborhood changes were already quite apparent. Finally in March 1912 the Land Title & Trust Company took the mortgage and the work started, the demolition of the "round-house" commencing on April 9th. The builder was George Robertson, and the new building—the Rectory unit—was complete on Feb. 8, 1913. At the same time substantial alterations were made in the chancel of the church, and shortly afterwards electricity was installed. The great building project was in progress, but the parish was once more heavily in debt.

And actually the problems of additional space for the Sunday School and other meetings was not solved by this first Rectory unit. It was only made worse, and a year later—without hope of continuing the building scheme at once—the Vestry tried to purchase No. 4813 Haverford Ave., the Turner property next door, as a temporary Parish Hall. It was not for sale. The situation was desperate; in a letter to the Bishop the Accounting Warden says:

"On Easter Monday we hold a Vestry election and congregational meeting; the meeting this year was held in the Church, the election in the Rector's Sacristy, and the social feature (refreshments) in the hallway, everyone standing or sitting on the stairs." The plans for the Parish House called for a four-

story building, honeycombed with choir rooms, guild rooms, an auditorium, gymnasium, etc. To integrate it with the proposed new church would involve tearing down the old church, and the new Hall would cost \$35,000. But where was the money to come from? The Diocese would not advance it; they were too skeptical about the changes in that section of the city. And so the work continued handicapped.

Then on Easter Day 1918 Mr. McHenry died. The whole parish was saddened. He had been rector for fifteen years, and had been universally popular.

After several months of uncertainty, the Vestry called the Rev. Howard M. Stuckert, of Christ Church, Woodbury, N.J. Dr. Stuckert remained at Holy Comforter for two years, teaching meanwhile at the University. They were difficult years, and at the end of them the church was once more getting help from the Sustentation Fund of the Diocese.

On December 11, 1920 the Rev. Charles Wesley Schiffer was appointed Missionary-in-Charge. He came into an unlikely situation, for the neighborhood was changing rapidly and financing the parish was a problem. The Bishop was only too well aware of this and just two years after Dr Schiffer's arrival suggested that the Vestry consider a proposal to merge Holy Comforter with St. James, Hestonville, not far distant—thus making the joint assets available for the support of a single clergyman. The matter was carefully weighed, but the decision was against it. The Vestry were still far from surrendering; adequate Parish House buildings still seemed to be the answer to a failing congregation, and only a month after the merger discussions they took steps to solve that problem.

To proceed with Mr. Brazier's plans was out of the question, so a temporary Parish Hall was proposed—something which could be fused into the ultimate plan whenever it might be realized. At this point Mr. James Kershaw, one of the Vestry, offered to erect a small brick building to adjoin the old

church and the newer Rectory for a sum of \$1000. The Guild Hall was 40' by 25' and connected with the rear of the lower floor of the old church so that the kitchen was convenient to the main room. After the work had begun Mr. Kershaw offered to add a second floor for an additional \$500 and this was done—the whole expense being borne by the parish, which was the only plan to which the Diocesan Board of Missions would agree. A letter from that Board to the Vestry said:

"The matter was very fully discussed by those present, who because of former reports and discussions were familiar with the subject. The general opinion was that it was unwise to build a view of possible changes which might affect the whole situation in the coming year but that, in view of the fact that there would be no call on the Diocese for funds, the assent ought to be given."

The building was in use in the fall of 1922 and things seemed promising.

But by 1927 over half the expenses of the parish were being met from Diocesan Funds and in November Bishop Garland wrote to Dr. Schiffer:

"At a meeting of the Budget Committee in passing the budget for 1928, it is questioned by the Committee whether you and your Vestry should not again seriously consider your present condition and the future of the Church, and see what recommendations you could report to us.

The Diocese is now paying towards the support of the salary \$1400 per year—plus Pension Premiums. Will you not talk it over with Mr. Harris and the other members of your Vestry and consider it seriously and let me hear from you at your early convenience? There is no immediate hurry about it.

We are recommending the appropriation for the next year, but we should decide within the next few months on a future policy."

Acting on the Bishop's suggestion the Vestry

gave the whole situation considerable thought and at their December meeting the momentous decision was made:

"Resolved, That it is the sense of the Vestry of the Church of the Holy Comforter that the present property be sold, the corporation continued and removed to a new site; and that a committee be appointed to view possible locations."

Dr. Schiffer requested that the committee for so serious a task be elected—the Rector, Mr. Harris, and Mr. Kershaw—and they began their investigations, looking first at possible sites in Oakmont and Merwood Park. Meanwhile Dr. Schiffer prepared his report for the West Philadelphia convocation, which was to meet in January, reviewing his work at Holy Comforter, telling of the difficulties, and the final decision to transplant the corporation to a suburban location. On February 1, 1928 the Congregation met and ratified the Resolution of the Vestry.

For a time there was a definite intention of moving to Oakmont, but in April the Vestry received a petition, presented by Mr. Robert J. Allen and Mr. John W. Seal, both Vestrymen, from ninety residents of "the Aronimink district" asking that this section be considered as a possible future home for Holy Comforter; also a piece of ground "covered with beautiful large trees" was offered to the Vestry at a nominal sum by the heirs of the Easby estate. Such interest on the part of a potential congregation was not to be disregarded and the Vestry finally settled on Aronimink as their choice, so notifying the Standing Committee. Episcopal approval came at once:

"The Standing Committee having advised me that in accord with Canon 12, Section 5, it has received the Petition of the Church of the Holy Comforter for a change of location to Burmont Ave., Aronimink, and has held a hearing on said petition. It has given me its opinion and decided in favor of the prayer being granted. Acting on this opinion, I therefore give my

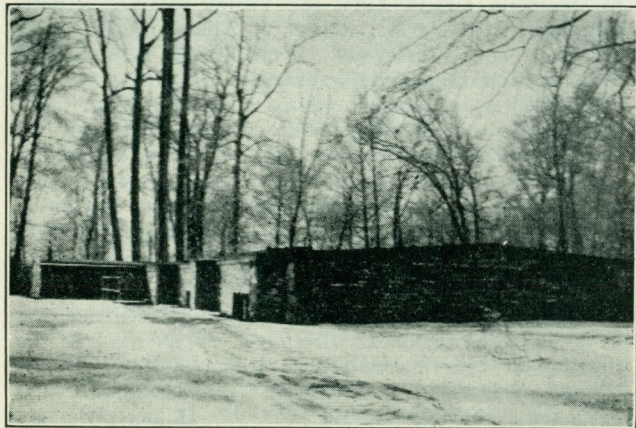
Official Consent to the change of location for the Church of the Holy Comforter to Burmont Ave., Aronimink.

June 23, 1928

Thos. J. Garland, Bishop of Penna.

Not only did Bishop Garland give his consent, but he also gave the Parish substantial help through the Diocese - \$5000 to pay for the land in Aronimink, \$15,000 to settle the mortgage on the old church, and a promise of at least \$25,000 toward the new building. Lewis Wood Easby was appointed architect for the new church and plans went forward rapidly.

On July 27th a meeting of the petitioners was called at the 69th Street Title & Trust Bldg. at Aronimink (now Williams Five & Ten) to discuss Mr. Easby's plans and matters in general. An organization Committee was set up—Messrs. Cheney Smith, Allen Seal, Kendrick B. Brown, and A. Dean Sneider—to interview the signers not present and arrange a temporary place for services.



The first regular service was held at Aronimink

on Sunday, Sept. 30th, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Brown, 1001 Childs Avenue—Morning Prayer, with Dr. Schiffer preaching. Other services were held at 1029 Lindale Avenue. Meanwhile Dr. Schiffer and his family remained in West Philadelphia, and the 8 A.M. service was continued at the old church until October 28th, when the old church of the Holy Comforter was officially closed, to be later reopened by the Diocese as St. Monica's Mission.

It was difficult to find a place for services in Aronimink as there were no empty stores or such places available and the Vestry decided to sign contracts for a new Rectory at once, Dr. Schiffer having offered to use the first floor of the house as a temporary church. So in November 1928 the agreement was drawn between the Vestry and Shelldrake Bros. for the present Rectory at 1005 Drexel Avenue. Dr. Schiffer moved out to Aronimink and from then until the basement of the Church was ready, the regular services were maintained in the Rectory, the altar being so placed that it could be seen both from the living and dining rooms.

During this time the Building Committee, consisting of the two Wardens, Mr. Harper and Mr. Harris, was engaged in securing bids on the new church. The work was to have been done by Mr. Kershaw, but his death in February made other arrangements necessary. Consequently bids were asked for the first unit—the basement only, covered with a temporary roof. On April 3, 1929 the contract was awarded to John R. Schaeffer of Philadelphia for \$16,200. Ground was broken on Easter Day 1929 and the cornerstone laid the following June. The Sunday School gathered in the new building for the first time on Sept. 22nd, and the first regular service was held on Sept. 29th.

Almost at once Holy Comforter's great enemy showed itself—WATER. What came through the roof was at least clean; what seeped through the walls brought the brown earth with it! At almost every Vestry meeting for years the matter was discussed.



Mr. Easby was called in; Mr. Schaeffer was called in. The roof was re-covered. The rain gutters were extended. Ventilators were tried, to eliminate the condensation under the roof. Drainage trenches were cut around the walls; then the drainage trenches were filled in. It was a long time before the problem was finally solved and those who came to church in those early days often recall sitting with their feet on the rungs of the chair ahead to escape the pools of water on the floor.

But in spite of such discomforts the work grew rapidly at the new location. The Sunday School filled a real need in the growing community and its membership increased by leaps and bounds. A Women's Guild was formed which by means of suppers etc. undertook to raise the funds for the annual taxes on the Rectory. And a Building Fund was begun, looking toward the erection of the upper portion of the church.

In December 1932 the Vestry determined to push ahead on the matter of building. The various organizations of the parish pledged their support and Dr. Schiffer appointed a Ways and Means Committee—Messrs. J. W. Seal, Drury Hilton, Howard B. Hindle, Sam Browne, and W. R. Hazzard—to see the Diocesan authorities and obtain the necessary permissions. And so well did they make their appeal that Bishop Taft selected the Church of the Holy Comforter, Aronimink, as the object of the Church Extension Fund's "January 1933 Call". In fact, the Diocese gave a great deal of help—\$2000 from Diocesan funds, \$500 as a personal gift from Bishop Taft, and \$2500 to be raised through the Dean of the Chester Convocation, the Rev. Charles W. Shreiner. The Vestry for their part undertook to raise \$4000 over and above the \$1000 pledged by the congregation.

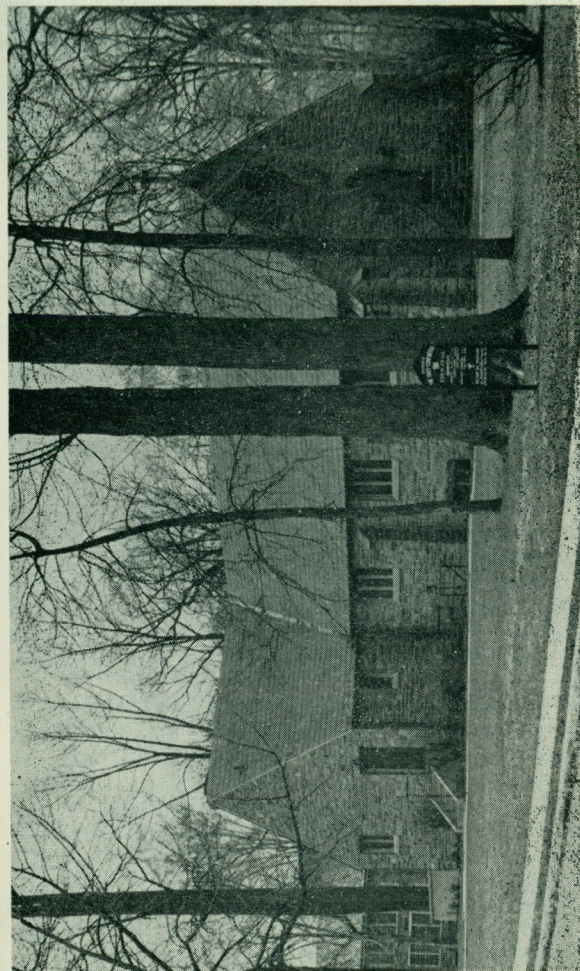
In April 1934 the Vestry signed the contract with Robert Brazell for the construction of the nave, south transept, and a temporary chancel. The building of the actual chancel, the other transept, and central tower of Mr. Easby's lovely Early English design

were deferred for lack of funds. The work went on smoothly and by fall the services were at length being held in a proper church, the first one being on Sept. 30, 1934. Just a year later, on November 3, 1935, the church was dedicated by Bishop Taitt, assisted by Dean Shreiner.

The church was far from debt-free and constant efforts were made on this score, culminating in a drive in the autumn of 1937 to clear it once for all. Dean Shreiner, as usual a great benefactor, arranged for a gift of \$2000 from the Woman's Auxiliary of the Chester Convocation on the understanding that Holy Comforter raised \$1500 itself by the following May. He also promised to contribute \$500 to Holy Comforter's share from the "orphan money" in his discretion as Dean. The congregation responded quickly to this wonderful offer, and by May the Vestry had \$935 of their share in hand. The Men's Club underwrote the balance, and the church was cleared—to the great joy of all its members.

But Dr. Schiffer, to whom the Church of the Holy Comforter owed so much and whose heart was so concerned with the success of the parish, did not live to see his dream realized in its entirety. Because of his failing health he had resigned as rector, effective December 1, 1937. He had been seventeen years Rector of Holy Comforter, had carried on through the difficulties of the last years at 48th and Haverford ave., and had had the vision to see the tremendous possibilities of the new location in Aronimink. Under his guidance the transition had been successfully made and the Vestry, receiving his resignation, promptly elected him Rector Emeritus, hoping to benefit by his wisdom even though he was no longer actively in charge. But this was not to be. He died suddenly on November 24th, before the resignation was effective, and Holy Comforter lost a great and good friend and pastor.

His successor was the Rev. A. Edwin Clattenburg, appointed by Bishop Taitt as the second priest-



EXTERIOR OF NEW CHURCH

in-charge of Holy Comforter at Aronimink. Things moved forward quietly during these years. The debt on the church had been cleared, and the next great event was the acquisition of a pipe organ to replace the old reed organ of earlier days. The new instrument, a small Kimball, was purchased by the Vestry with funds made available by Dr. Mary Brown. Subsequently, in May 1944, Dr. Brown cancelled her note, making the church a gift of the organ, which has since been considered as a memorial to her.

The neighborhood was rapidly expanding all this time. In January 1941 Bond Avenue was cut through and paved. New houses were springing up all around the church and with the coming of the Aronimink School, Holy Comforter—the first church in Aronimink—became more than ever the religious center of the neighborhood. This growth made great demands on the rector and Dr. Clattenburg, being none too well, felt it best to resign in favor of a younger man, which he did on October 1, 1941.

The Rev. Albert E. Wilcox was appointed at once to the post of Priest-in-Charge, and under his able leadership the parish prospered as never before. The constant influx of new families inevitably brought people to services and children to Sunday School, but it was the friendly ministrations of Mr. Wilcox which won these newcomers and welded them into the fabric of the parish life.

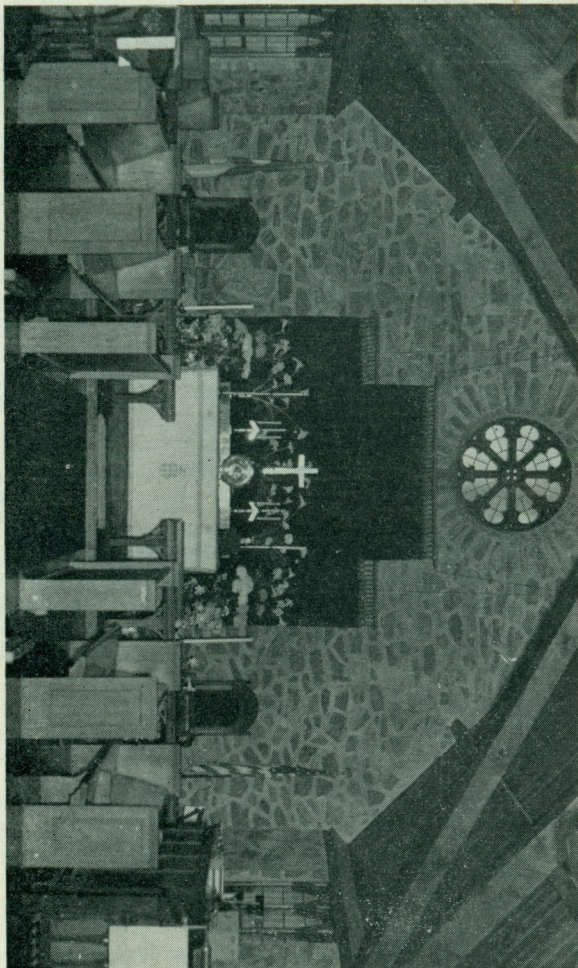
Typical of the growing activity of the parish in these years was the formation of a Church School Parent-Teachers Association, a step far in advance of the time generally, but advisable at Holy Comforter because of the size and increasing demands of the Sunday School. This was organized in the winter of 1942, the first officers and directors being: Mrs. George E. Georgion, Mrs. Drury Hinton, and Mrs. Orvis O. Dantzer; Mr. Stuart B. Hutchinson, Mr. Henry B. Warner, and Mr. William Harden; with the Rector and Mr. Elmer Royle, the Superintendent, as associate directors.

Another move dictated by the growing number of parochial organizations was the forming of a General Church Committee—now known as the Parish Council. This group, made up of representatives of the various organizations, was suggested by the Accounting Warden, Mr. Howard B. Hindle, as a means of better integrating the complex parish activities. They first met in December 1943, Mr. Hindle acting as president that year.

The clearing of the debt on the Rectory was the next general campaign. The mortgage had been refinanced in March 1943, and plans were made to pay it off as soon as possible. In 1944 the Diocese offered the Vestry \$1000 toward this purpose if the congregation could match the amount. This was done, the \$2000 reduction made shortly after Easter. A balance of \$1800 remained and the Vestry resolved to raise this before the new year. Again they succeeded. In November the Accounting Warden was authorized to pay in full the principle and interest outstanding on the mortgage. The Church of the Holy Comforter was once again debt free.

At the same time the Vestry were able to arrange the parish budget without receiving aid from the Sustentation Fund of the Diocese. The effective Every Member Canvass work of Mr. George E. Georgion was largely responsible for this condition. Thus in January 1945 Holy Comforter could apply for the restoration of full parish status—after an interval of twenty-five years. Bishop Hart confirmed this in May, and Mr. Wilcox was duly elected Rector of the parish.

The advance did not stop however. The building was still uncompleted, as left in 1934; it was manifestly inadequate, and the next step was to consider its completion. On careful consideration it was now seen that the original plans would not now provide for present needs, and so various architects were consulted in regard to rearranging the design to achieve the maximum use of the ground available. A Build-



ing Committee was appointed, Dr. Drury Hinton, Chairman; a Building Fund was begun; and in March 1945 Mr. T. Norman Mansell was selected as architect for the new developments, which involved reorienting the church and totally reworking the plans.

In June 1946 Mr. Wilcox resigned, for reasons of health, for the rectorship of the parish had become increasingly taxing, and the present incumbent, the Rev. Richard S. Bailey, was called, taking charge in November.

Since then the parish has continued to grow. The building of new homes within its bounds seems endless and every new development makes greater demands upon the church. As a stop-gap move in 1947 the two unfinished wings of the church were built up—the north transept as a choir room and the originally intended chancel space as a guild room; and at the same time the interior furnishings of the church were reversed, so that the new guild room came at the rear of the nave and could be used for overflow seating. The reversing of the interior is part of the overall rearrangement of the building design and prepares the way for the eventual construction of a chancel and appending wings at the Burmont Road end of the building.

In the fall of 1948 the Aronimink Steam Heating Corp., which had supplied both church and rectory with steam, failed and the Vestry were faced with the cost of installing furnaces in both buildings. But these expenses have been met and conquered, and there are hopes that the enlargement of the church is not too far in the future.

Other signs of growth are the necessity of dividing the Church School—half meeting at 9:30 A.M., the others at 11 A.M.—because of the space shortage; the adaption of the rotation principle in the Vestry and the enlargement of the Vestry from nine to eleven, so that more of the very able men in the parish may share in its work; and the reorganization of the Woman's Guild and Auxiliary on the old Holy Com-

forter tradition of "Chapters" or neighborhood groups because of the increasing tendency of the parish to subdivide around the various development shopping centers.

The Parish of the Church of the Holy Comforter, Aronimink, is a large and heavily populated area and the Mission Sunday School of 1863 has come a long way to be able to serve those who need it as well as it does. Its fortunes have been remarkably uneven, but now—after surmounting the trials of moving and regaining lost advances—Holy Comforter, in this Seventy-Fifth Year of Incorporation, looks forward to coming into its own and developing a solid, substantial program of service to God and the community.

RECTORS and PRIESTS-IN-CHARGE Of The CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER

The Rev. Joseph H. Stone, 1868-70.
The Rev. William H. Platt, 1870-74.
The Rev. Henry Morton Reed, 1874-84.
The Rev. G. D. E. Mortimer, 1884-85.
The Rev. E. H. Supplee, 1885-87.
The Rev. Horace Fuller, 1887-90.
The Rev. Robert Blight, 1891.
The Rev. Wm. H. Stark, 1892.
The Rev. William N. Bailey, 1893-94.
The Rev. Sam'l H. Meade, 1895.
The Rev. J. J. Lanier, 1895-96.
The Rev. W. F. C. Morsell, 1896-1902.
The Rev. Edward James McHenry, 1903-18.
The Rev. Howard M. Stuckert, 1918-20.
The Rev. Charles Wesley Schiffer, 1920-37.
The Rev. A. Edwin Clattenburg, 1937-41.
The Rev. Albert E. Wilcox, 1941-46.
The Rev. Richard S. Bailey, 1946-

WARDENS OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER

Rector's Wardens

Charles H. Yost, 1875-1892.
Charles G. Keilig, 1893-1902.
Elwood T. Matlack, 1903-1904.
Edward R. Durborow, 1905.
Edward T. Adams, 1906-1909
John F. James, 1910-1916.
William J. Harper, 1917-1929.
Robert J. Allen, 1930-1941.
Dr. Drury Hinton, 1942-1946.
George E. Georgion, 1947.
E. T. Garlick, 1948.
John W. Seal, Sr., 1949.

Accounting Wardens

John B. Squires, 1875.
Caleb J. Duxberry, 1876-1877.
Hugh P. Schetky, 1878-1885.
Col. J. C. Harbert, 1886-1887.
William D. Squires, 1888-1894.
A. F. Hatheway, 1895.
L. Willard Harris, 1896-1904.
Elwood T. Matlack, 1905-1906.
L. Willard Harris, 1907-1932.
Howard B. Hindle, 1933-1947.
Warren F. Leatherman, 1948.

(Enlargement of the Vestry in 1948 alters
this arrangement).

1949 - 1950

Rector's Warden John W. Seal, Sr.
Peoples' Warden Howard B. Hindle
Treasurer Warren F. Leatherman

MEMORIAL AND VARIOUS GIFTS TO THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER

Altar Vessels, Fittings, Etc.

- Silver Chalice and Paten—Presented by Mrs. S. C. Harbert and friends, 1894.
- Silver Chalice—Presented by the Guild of the Good Shepherd, 1891; altered in memory of William and Frances Partridge.
- Silver Bread-Box—Presented by Miss Ethel McCarty, February, 1904.
- Lavabo Bowl—Gift of Mrs. L. Willard Harris, Christmas, 1903.
- Silver Flagon—Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel L. H. Burke and Sue Burke, 1948.
- Baptismal Bowl—In memory of Virginia R. Dodge. (From the Church of the Incarnation, Phila.)
- Silver Alms Basin—In memory of Caroline B. Dodge, 1827-1911. (From the Church of the Incarnation, Phila.)
- Silver Collection Plates—From the Church of the Incarnation.
- Brass Alms Basin—In memory of Frederick Kaufman, April 23, 1905.
- Brass Collection Plates—Gift of the Men's Club, Easter, 1943.
- Baptismal Ewer—Gift of Miss Grace Schiffer.
- Brass Cross for Sick Room Use—Gift of Mrs. A. V. Wilson.
- Candlesticks for Sick Room Use—Gift of Deaconess Mary Frances Ward.
- Altar Cross—In memory of Elizabeth Brooke Hindle, 1865-1942.
- Sanctuary Floor Candlesticks—In memory of Charles Wesley Schiffer, Rector, 1920-1937.
- Eucharistic Candlesticks—From Wa-Wa Chapel (Media, Pa.) through the Rev. Wm. J. Alberts.
- Three-Branch Candlesticks—In memory of John and Isabel Allen, and of John and Ellen Kochersperger.
- Altar Vases—In memory of William and Charlotte

- Seal, and of Charles and Margaret Kochersperger.
- Old Altar Cross, Two Candlesticks, and Two Vases—Presented by the Altar Chapter, Easter, 1891.
- Processional Cross—Presented by St. Margaret's Class (Mrs. Herbert Brown's), June 7, 1908.
- Processional Cross—In memory of Richard C. Barrington, Jr., 1910-1941.
- Church School Processional Cross—In memory of Kate H. Godwin, 1861-1941.
- Crucifer's Pendant Cross—In memory of Mary Frances Freeman.
- Second Crucifer's Pendant Cross—In memory of Charles Beck, Choir Boy.
- Litany Desk Book—In memory of Grace Knight Adams.
- Red Morocco Prayer Book—In memory of William G. Serrill.

Furniture, Etc.

- Altar Rail—Gift of Mr. William Easby, Jr., (made from trees felled when the present church was built).
 - Sanctuary Rug—Gift of Mr. Harry W. Leithold.
 - Baptismal Font—From the Church of the Incarnation, Phila. Children's Offering, 1870.
 - Pipe Organ—Gift of and memorial to Dr. Mary Brown.
 - Sacristy Vestment Cabinet—Gift of Chapter "Sisters of Bethany", 1905.
 - Litany Desk—In memory of George and Emma Selwarty.
 - Choir Stalls—Presented by the Women's Guild.
 - Clergy Stall—In memory of Marion Manchester Hindle.
 - Pew Screens—(a) In memory of Sister Rhoda, C. S. M.
—(b) In memory of Leroy B. Hinton.
 - PEWS—(in order, front to back)
- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In memory of James Lord. Presented by Anna G. Breen. Presented by Mr. & Mrs. Robert J. Allen, and Mr. & Mrs. John W. Seal. In memoriam, Robert L. Goldsmith. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In memory of Charles & Ellen Loftus Schiffer. Presented by Mr. & Mrs. C. B. Shourds. In memory of Judge D. A. Hinton. Presented by Mrs. Charles Fritz Lehman. |
|---|--|

Presented by Mr. & Mrs. W. R. Hazzard.	Presented by Mr. & Mrs. James Ifill.
Presented by Mr. & Mrs. John R. Townsend.	In memory of Annie Frazer.
Presented by Mr. & Mrs. Wallace Peterson.	Presented by Mr. & Mrs. Henry B. Warner.
Presented by Mr. & Mrs. J. J. Leverette.	In memory of Mary Gar- retson Mervine.
Presented by Mr. & Mrs. O. W. Marden & family.	Presented by E. T. Garlick.
In memory of Carl Lowa Moser.	In memory of Henry & Hester Davis.
Presented by Mr. & Mrs. Frederick G. Epp.	Presented by Mr. & Mrs. George W. Raisch.
In memory of William D. and Jennie E. Angell, by their daughter, Mrs. Charles W. Schiffer.	In memory of Stella Trox- ell, by her husband and sons.
Presented by the Church School.	In memory of Fannie C. Breerwood, by her sons.

Ornamental Entrance Lanterns—Gift of Mrs. James
S. Ifill.

Altar Hangings, Etc.

White Frontal, etc.—Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John W.
Seal.

Made by Mrs. W. S. Waite, Mrs. Thos. J. Johnson,
Mrs. H. B. Hindle.

White Festival Frontal—From the Church of the
Incarnation, Phila

Violet Frontal, etc.—Gift of Altar Guild, made by
Mrs. W. S. Waite.

Violet Burse and Veil—Given by Robert L. and Lawr-
ence D. Goldsmith.

Green Frontal—Made by Mrs. Paul Steele, Mrs. T. J.
Johnson, Mrs. H. B. Hindle.

Green Pulpit Fall, etc.—Made by Miss Helen Weeks
and Mrs. T. J. Johnson.

Red Frontal—Gift of the Altar Guild and Various
Individuals. Made for, and first used at, Diamond
Jubilee Service, Whitsunday, 1950.

Red Eucharistic Vestments—Gift of the Woman's
Auxiliary.

Dossal—Gift of Mrs. Stewart Kalmey.

